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ABSTRACT

More and more legislatures are introducing program consolidation to assist districts anxious to increase flexibility and reduce fragmentation among categorical programs. To assess this strategy, findings related to efforts to achieve greater flexibility and consolidation of resources across special education, Title I, and programs for language-minority students in five local school districts are presented here. For this study, program consolidation refers to the margin of the delivery of federal education programs. The findings were derived from a 3-year investigation of education-reform initiatives implemented in local school districts in five states, with an emphasis on the initiatives' impact upon students with disabilities. The specific strategies that each district used to blend funds and other resources across targeted programs are discussed along with a cross-site analysis identifying similarities and differences in tactics. In addition, conclusions are drawn regarding factors that contributed to or impeded effective program consolidation efforts, followed by recommendations for districts contemplating greater program blending. Results indicate that program consolidation coupled with schoolwide ownership of all students may provide previously untested opportunities to contribute to the delivery of the best educational services in a more efficient manner to all students. An appendix summarizes the five districts' profiles. (Contains 19 references.) (RJM)

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Blended Resources at the Local Level: An Analysis of Five Districts' Models

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In the current era of school reform initiatives aimed at improving student performance with challenging standards, assessments and enhanced accountability all aspects of public education are being carefully considered for restructuring and improvement. Initiatives fostered by recent federal and state legislation have developed in three distinct areas. The first two, rigorous standards and corresponding assessments, create the framework for system wide reform. The third area, aims to improve the efficiency of schools and guarantee that all students should have a fair opportunity to access and master the new curriculum and assessments (Goals 2000, 1994; Smith & O'Day, 1991). Smith and O'Day state that in order to achieve the goal of improved standards, assessments and greater accountability, federal and state education policies must be collaborative and flexible and include:

> ...a restructured governance system [so that] schools [or a school] would have the resources, flexibility, and responsibility to design and implement effective strategies for preparing their students to learn the content of the curriculum frameworks to a high level of performance (p. 253).

An essential component to creating flexible schools is reducing cumbersome regulatory impediments and blending federal categorical programs resources such as special education, Title I, and Title VII of Improving America's Schools Act and similar target aid programs such as drug-free schools, and migrant education.

Rationale for Consolidating Funding

Federal and state programs designed to assist special populations such as students with disabilities, English language learners or economically disadvantaged groups were designed to

supplement but not supplant traditional curriculum and instruction. Over the years, these federal and state categorical programs have evolved into separate programs with distinct physical spaces and staff often isolated from the general education students (Moore, Walker, & Holland, 1982; Verstegen, 1996). Questions have been raised about efficiency as well as regulatory burdens by practitioners, administrators, and researchers (Moore, et al, 1982; Verstegen, 1996; McLaughlin & Verstegen, in press). The supplement not supplant mandate has created extreme fiscal accountability procedures which in turn have resulted in the use of pull-out programs or other instructional models that separated children who were specifically funded and their teachers from general classrooms. Research has questioned whether or not students are best served in these pull-out programs that fragment their education (c. f. Allington & McGill-Franze, 1989; Anderson & Pelicer, 1990; Kimbrough & Hill, 1983; Tsang & Levin, 1983).

Increasing flexibility in how targeted aid is used is seen as maximizing the efficient use of valuable federal resources dollars. However, in the past, some researchers have cited the risks associated with consolidation of targeted funds. According to a 1994 GAO report of regulatory flexibility, program planning effected whether or not schools used available flexibility to actually improve educational programs (General Accounting Office, 1994). A more recent report released by the Government Accounting Office (GAO, 1998), indicates that districts are increasingly investigating more flexible approaches for funding education in order to "consolidate duplicative programs and eliminate regulations seen as unnecessarily limiting local flexibility" (p. 9). Questions challenging schools committed to flexibility are deciding the amount of flexibility allowed and extent of accountability for student outcomes. Concurrently, new reforms such as

standards and assessments and increased accountability will push districts to focus their attention on the outcomes of educational services that are delivered rather than a more traditional model of accountability that focuses upon the process or procedures. These emerging accountability mechanisms may reduce the emphasis on tracking dollars and the reliance on procedural compliance.

Yet, barriers identified by state, district and school personnel that are attempting to create more flexible programs in the 1994 GAO study include: "1) schools' satisfaction with their current performance levels; 2) government emphasis on compliance monitoring; and 3) the temporary status of some states; flexibility provisions (p. 12)." In addition, impediments identified by education researchers were: "discouragement of district officials, lack of school leadership, lack of money and time, and cautious, incremental nature of changes in schools" (p. 12).

Federal Legislation Promoting Program Consolidation

Program consolidation is a strategy increasingly being introduced in federal and state legislation to assist districts anxious to increase the flexibility and reduce fragmentation among categorical programs such as those identified above. Federal legislation provisions are fostering flexibility through waiver provisions such as those evident in, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, PL No. 103-227, Improving America's School Act, PL No. 103-328 (IASA), and School-To-Work-Opportunities Act of 1994. P. L.No. 103.239. See Table 1 from McLaughlin and Verstegen (in press) for a brief summary of new provisions fostering program flexibility .

Federal legislation governing special education, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1994 PL No. 94-142, (IDEA) has traditionally been excluded from federal waiver language. However, the 1997 amendments to the IDEA (PL 105-17) contain language aimed at promoting greater flexibility in the use of federal Part B resources, while ensuring accountability for eligible students receiving the services they are guaranteed by law. The new 1997 provision allows local districts to use funds for schoolwide programs limited only by the number of children identified with disabilities multiplied by the district per pupil allocation, and allows a local district to use money supporting students with disabilities and related services and supplementary aids and services in accordance with an IEP even if one or more students without disabilities benefits from the services (McLaughlin & Verstegen, in press). The 1997 amendments signal the federal intent to increase categorical program flexibility with special education.

Consolidation typically provides greater autonomy at the individual school building level and may lead to more innovative and individualized programs for all students. In addition, it may lead to greater efficiency by eliminating program overlap and decreasing fragmentation of instructional programs. Ultimately, it may permit resources to be used with a larger number of students to promote early prevention for students at risk or participating in remedial programs.

This paper will present findings related to efforts to achieve greater flexibility and consolidation of resources across, special education, Title I and programs for language minority students in 5 local school districts. The findings were derived from a three year investigation of education reform initiatives implemented in local school districts in 5 states across the United

States and their impact upon students with disabilities. The specific strategies used by each of the districts to blend funds and other resources across targeted programs implemented are presented along with a cross-site analysis identifying similarities and differences in strategies. In addition, conclusions are drawn regarding factors that contributed or impeded effective program consolidation efforts as well as recommendations for districts contemplating greater program blending.

For the purpose of this research, program consolidation refers to the merging or blending of the delivery of federal education programs such as Title I of IASA, IDEA, as well as state compensatory and special education and programs for English language learners. These are traditionally referred to as categorical programs.

Methodology

Data Source

The data utilized for this study were extracted from a larger, ongoing research project investigating state and local general education reform policies and their impact upon special education practices. The five local districts were selected on the basis of their active engagement in school reform within their respective states as well as their diverse geographic and demographic characteristics. The districts included: Banneker, a large urban system with a predominantly minority student population, two suburban districts, Watertown and Doyle County; and two rural districts, Hanley County and Morgan River.* The districts were selected

* All names are fictitious

in 1994 based upon at least five field recommendations and a preliminary document review to confirm their status as active reform districts. Specific criteria for selecting the case study sites included: regional demographic diversity; evidence of substantive and systemic general education reforms that includes students with disabilities; and a commitment on the part of the district to participate in the research for the duration of the three year project. Two of the districts are in states that had been implementing significant standards-based reform initiatives since 1990. Three are in states that have just begun reform agendas. Three of the states were Ed-Flex states meaning that they had applied for and received mega-waiver authority under IASA, Title I. Under this provision, states may apply for specific waivers of regulations under Title I and other programs but not IDEA. Waivers must be specifically requested and the proposal must include specific measurable educational improvement goals and expected outcomes for students eligible to receive services from the respective programs (IASA, 1994). For a profile of each of the five districts see Appendix A.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using traditional case study methodology (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1994). Data were gathered during week- long site visits to each of the 5 districts conducted between 1994 - 1997 by the primary investigator and three graduate assistants. In-depth open ended interviews were conducted and observations were recorded during site visits. Thorough documents reviews were conducted pre and post site visits to inform interviews as well as validate interview data. Examples of documents analyzed include, but were not limited to:

demographics reports; student handbooks; curricular guides; board minutes; district wide annual reports; and annual school performance/report cards.

Interviews were conducted with a minimum of 25 individuals in each of the districts including: central office administrators, school level administrators, teachers and related services staff, parents, and community representatives. Open-ended interview protocols for each unique type of informant were developed and served to guide interviews and guarantee a degree of consistency across the five districts while allowing for individual district anomalies. Protocols were designed to solicit information in the following areas: standards, assessments, accountability, governance change, finance, professional development and family and community collaboration. Protocols were designed for each type of respondent that sought their particular perspective on district policies and programs as well as the impact upon students with disabilities.

On-site interviews were audio recorded. Tapes were transcribed and converted to Ethnograph 4.0 for data management and sorting purposes. All interviews were coded in order to separate the data by particular themes. The primary investigator as well as two graduate assistants that participated in the site visits were responsible for coding transcriptions. For the purpose of this targeted research investigation, the code "program blending" was utilized to sort all relevant interview data into manageable chunks of information. Final analyses consisted of sorting the transcripts by subcodes that identified strategies, facilitating factors, and barriers to consolidation within the broader context of the district case studies. Follow-up interviews and document reviews were conducted when needed to develop a more complete picture of a district.

The data collected from the various resources were used to construct five individual case studies. A "member check" was conducted in each of the districts by distributing drafts of the case studies to contacts in each of the districts to verify data (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1994; Mayhut & Morehouse, 1994). A few minor areas of disagreement were identified and resolved by a reexamination of the transcript data and/or documents. Program descriptions and cross-case analysis of larger themes have been previously reported in McLaughlin, Henderson & Rhim (1997; in press).

Findings

Across the five districts different models of program blending were evident. The following section highlights examples of program blending in each of the five sites followed by a summary of the common themes culled from the analysis of all the districts.

Banneker

Banneker engaged in consolidated planning through School Improvement Plans that centered around specific goals that were linked to improving student performance on mandated assessments. The planning process was conceptualized much like other districts in which school staff were instructed to evaluate student assessment and other data and identify strategies and resources aligned with the goals. In Banneker, individual schools tended to have very restrictive ideas about how flexibly they could use targeted resources, most notably Title 1 and special education. The school improvement planning process was very haphazard across schools and perceived by some administrators as "just getting started."

Schools were rule-bound and almost obsessed with procedures, often with incomplete or inaccurate knowledge of the procedures. Principals were quick to cite reasons that new more collaborative models could not occur. These included fears about being out of compliance in special education. In addition, the district Title 1 director had been vocally inflexible about pursuing more coordination between that his program and other efforts in the schools. As one state-level administrator said, "We tried to look at more whole-school approaches with [the district director], but he did not want to give up control over his dollars."

The most flexible schools were those with schoolwide Title 1 programs. In these schools, there was less attention to which children were receiving specific instruction or services. However, even in these schools, special education teachers and resources were very separate. In part, the segregation of special education reflected the traditional service model for the district. In addition, the district also was operating under a long-standing court order in special education that had appeared to have thwarted special education decision-making at the school levels.

There were some indications that more flexible use of staff, including special education teachers, was beginning to occur in some schools. With the desire to promote more inclusion, some schools were beginning to explore co-teaching models. However, often this meant that a general and special education teacher would merge their classrooms. Some resource teachers also worked in general education classrooms, but in general they indicated that they focused mostly on the students with IEPs.

With respect to resources other than personnel, schools received professional development funds as a block and allocated these plus other resources essentially to their own

professional development agendas. At the district level, special education ran their own professional development program and these resources were kept separate from other training money. Materials and supplies were also designated as special education items within a school's budget to insure that individual special education teachers received an annual budget. Reportedly there had been problems when supply monies were left to the discretion of a principal because special education tended to not receive any funds. The problems of this separation seemed to emerge with respect to textbooks and other curriculum materials. According to some principals who were interviewed, if they wanted special education teachers to have materials that were used in general education, they had to take it out of their "regular" budget. However, at least one district administrator disagreed with this perception, saying that the "whole school" could decide how to allocate the funds. Clearly, the district was just beginning to move toward more school-wide planning and thinking of schools as unified organizations as opposed to a collection of programs. Yet, the overly legalistic and fragmented history of programs within the district are likely to pose major barriers to greater resource consolidation.

Hanley County

Hanley County's efforts to consolidate resources are synonymous with its large-scale school and district planning efforts. Hanley County had developed a comprehensive, coordinated plan as part of the state education reform. This "transformation" plan was a biannual report of school and district performance in core academic and nonacademic areas (i.e., communication and student behavior) and laid out a detailed plan for achieving targeted goals. Recently, however, the SEA has moved from requiring a plan designed to facilitate the transition to new

state reforms to a consolidated planning effort from all schools and districts. This planning process is described as a "single, LEA-friendly process for funding application and allocation which leverages all available funds, regardless of source, on academic improvement." The consolidated planning process acknowledges district responsibility for accountability and local district capacity to support schools. This consolidated plan serves as a single application for state, federal and other funds flowing to the school districts from the SEA; the plan will be considered the single reporting document. The consolidated plan submitted by a school district to the SEA will serve as the single application for state and federal support through the federal IASA Titles I, II, IV, and VI, IDEA and state professional development funds. Hanley County receives over $1 million in federal Title I money. In 1996-97, the district maintained four Title I school-wide projects, all at elementary schools.

Each school develops a school improvement plan called an Action Plans specific to the needs of its students. Needs analyses are conducted and goals and objectives are operationalized through development of school action plans which drive district action plans. Strategies and activities are designed to achieve the objectives. Preliminary school plans submitted to the district include both resources available for use at the discretion of the school (for example, Title I school allocations and professional development school allocations) and resources for which the source is not known, such as those to be used at the discretion of the district (e.g., Title II, IV, VI). From these preliminary school plans, the district planning team develops a planning budget for school and district-wide needs. Based on this school/district planning budget, individual

schools revise plans and develop a detailed budget adjusting the objectives and/or strategies and activities to be implemented.

At the district level, resource consolidation is reflected in the two-year transformation plan, which concentrates largely on addressing district and state goals through staff development and support in four areas: core academic areas, writing, behavior, and communication. An example of an activity designed to improve the performance of students on the statewide assessment is: all staff will be provided opportunities for training in performance assessment/ continuous assessment through mentoring, shadowing, new teacher induction, curriculum committees, etc. Funding to support the materials, stipends, substitute pay and registration fees necessary will be provided from district budgets, state reform monies, preschool, Titles I, II, IV, and VI, extended school services, and IDEA-Part B. Additionally, personnel share responsibility for oversight and implementation of this activity; professional development coordinators, principals, preschool coordinators, and instructional supervisors are all accountable for efforts to fulfill this activity.

Consolidated planning efforts at a school level are driven in large part by the school site governance structure. Individual site-based decision making teams share responsibility for development of the school action plans and many have capitalized on blending resources to meet specialized needs of the school's students and staff. One middle school, for example, in response to low statewide science assessment results, redirected a Title I-funded science teacher at one middle school to support 5th and 6th grade science instruction. A second, common example across elementary schools was the shared assignment of paraprofessionals, funded from Title I,

state compensatory funds and special education money, in preschool and nongraded primary classrooms.

In practice, Hanley's blended programs provide teachers the freedom to serve students in a more flexible manner. One elementary special education teacher commented:

> "I include kids that aren't (special education) in my instruction. The kids don't know which kids are mine and so, if I go into a classroom and there are other kids who need assistance too, I just pull them with mine and teach them all as one group."

Doyle County

Doyle County also coordinated many of its efforts to blend resources at a school level in through its site-based governance structures. Doyle County has adopted a comprehensive professional development program designed to foster individual career development and promotion, as well as coordinate school-wide development efforts. One mechanism to address the latter goal is the allocation of site responsibility pay to each school building equaling $4.50 per student. The site management council is then responsible for determining its distribution consistent with its school improvement plan and individual school goals. The site responsibility pay is a relatively modest $100,000 district-wide and is supported through a combination of state and district professional development funds from various sources. The return on these funds, however, is considered remarkable. School management councils take the responsibility for distributing funds very seriously. Allocation decisions have prompted comprehensive discussion

and fostered greater accountability for school-site committees. One administrator raved about the reaction the program has received at the school level:

> "Schools think this is the greatest thing since sliced bread, they love it. Even though the amount of money is small, they feel someone is finally recognizing all this other extra stuff they do, that has never been recognized before. What's interesting is... how much learning went on as the teachers and other site council members tried to figure this out. Suddenly they had a whole different perspective about how some of these decisions are made."

Another example of use of consolidating resources is evident in Doyle County's preschool program. Though the District receives no Head Start funds, it supports preschools in 11 of its elementary schools. All preschool classes include students with disabilities, but at no more than a 1-to-2 ratio to nondisabled children. Special education IDEA- B funds support the program as do funds from a statewide systems change inclusion grant. Additionally, a local university contributes professional development and consultative services through a grant to address challenging behaviors in young children. Most of the non-disabled preschoolers enroll on a tuition basis.

Paraprofessionals are also jointly funded throughout Doyle County schools. These individuals, funded via federal Title I and IDEA, as well as complementary state aide programs, provide in-classroom instructional and behavioral support for students with special needs, including those with identified disabilities.

A final example of blended resources in Doyle County is a response to the state and district standards-development. Neighboring school systems had witnessed significant increases in referrals to special education as rigorous content standards were adopted. To avert this large influx of newly-identified students with disabilities, Doyle County uses federal and state professional development funds to support additional staff development for all teachers on the impact of district content standards for low-achieving and at-risk students.

Morgan River

Morgan River reports doing "a lot of blended funding." The consolidation of program resources is facilitated by the district's implementation of site-based management. The governance structure provides individual schools the discretion to allocate their fiscal and human resources to best meet their individual school needs. One central administrator summed up the effect of site-based management when he stated "Every school that you go to in the district has its own flavor. And it kind of developed in its own way according to what it saw as its needs."

In this district blending is primarily occurring in the area of teachers' and paraprofessionals' salaries. The funds that are being blended typically are drawn from special education, Title I, bilingual education, and state educational enhancement dollars for K-3. The different funding streams are commingled at the school level based upon the decisions of school committees comprised mostly of teachers and administrators. Commingling provides freedom to teachers and paraprofessionals to serve a variety of student populations who may be eligible to receive services from various categorical programs. In some individual schools that have elected to blend their categorical programs funds, general and special education teachers and aides work

with students based on need rather than eligibility or label. As noted by one teacher, "If your funding [the paraprofessionals] only from special education or Title I, or whatever, then legally that's the only children that they're supposed to work with, so we mingle."

There is overwhelming support in this district for the practice of blending resources in order to effectively serve a diverse group of student learners. Increased program flexibility has enabled individual schools and the central office to be more creative as they endeavor to serve a growing population of students with specialized needs. A special education administrator in Morgan River, reported that when he receives requests from schools for additional special education staff:

> We look at options. All options and it's like brainstorming. Which some good things have come out of. [We find that] you don't really need to add staff... but perhaps change the way the school is serving the student. [Using other people and] doing what's best for the student without adding dollars.

Morgan River's school governance structure means that not all schools utilize consolidated options. An interview with a teacher who had previously taught in a district school that blended funds demonstrated the value of jointly funding paraprofessionals, "When I was at Smith, all of our educational assistants were multi-funded, but not here. Which makes it hard on our special education assistants because they have to just work with those kids."

Morgan River has also shifted their Title I funded computer labs to integrating the technology into individual classrooms. Now computers are available for use by all students,

although Title 1 students receive priority, and these students are not in a strictly pull-out program that isolates them from the general curriculum.

The downside of blended funding is the potential for dilution of targeted funds for other programs. For instance, one special education administrator reported that general education "people want to take some of our budget [for staff] and this has been a big issue." Statements such as this reiterate the importance of accountability. As one special educator stated,

> ...part of our job is to make sure that we keep special education staff adequate in a building …you know I will tell a school 'you are allocated 3.6 teachers at your school'. As far as I'm concerned, that can be 20 individuals (including paraprofessionals and portions of teachers). But when you get done, I want to make sure you've got 3.6 full-time equivalents special education teachers in your building.

In Morgan River, consolidated funding occurred more at the elementary level than at the secondary level. This may be due primarily to the fact that Title I and special education inclusion is more common in the elementary grades and there are more paraprofessionals. An example of a type of resource consolidation occurred at one of the district's junior high schools that had hired teachers with special education certification to fill general education vacancies. The double certification enabled the school to hire one teacher to teach both general and special education but utilize only one teacher position. In practice the teacher has the regular responsibilities of a classroom teacher but also is responsible for individual students with disabilities. The extra teacher position then was used to hire paraprofessionals.

Watertown

Watertown is currently implementing a locally driven standards based curriculum and companion assessments. Watertown is developing and administering new assessments that all students, with the exception of students with severe disabilities, will complete. Watertown is located in a state that enacted a form of "mega-waiver" legislation in special education specifically aimed at decreasing regulatory burden and facilitating innovative collaboration among various specialized programs. The waiver legislation was targeted at special education programs as part of the state funding formula overhaul. Watertown was one of the first districts in the state to be awarded a waiver to implement innovative changes to their special education programs. In seeking the waivers, Watertown aimed to "serve kids without labeling them."

As a component of the its state waiver, Watertown participated in a state program that permitted development of alternative delivery systems aimed among other things to "use all available resources to design the best educational plan for the student based on multi-modal assessments and authorization for all staff members to be available to work with all students." The focus of this program was to use state special education funds to promote prevention and early intervention strategies. In addition, the district is implementing a budget process that replaces current caseload funding with consolidated blocks of money distributed to schools based on staffing. The funds can be allocated at the building level based as staff deem necessary to manage current special education case loads. The waivers have facilitated school level decision making among general and special educators and reportedly has sparked more creative methods of serving students.

A principal who supported the changes in special education, cited his frustration with the previous categorical programs, "I had an argument with a resource teacher who told me that her aide could not go out and do recess duty. And I said, 'What do you mean she can't do recess?' and she said, "Well, she's special education." The principal's view was that the paraprofessional may be employed by special education but is still a professional member of the school staff who should be available to the entire school when appropriate.

One strategy used in Watertown to consolidate personnel resources is learning centers that support a variety of students. One teacher explained the flexibility inherent in the learning center:

> ...at any one point in time you might go in there and just see an aide a teacher working with somebody. But, one of those teachers is also our gifted coordinator for the district, so ...its a real fluid flexible kind of thing...we have students who are not verified (e.g., not identified as special education) who are coming in and working with us...whether we verify them or not, we really try to be pretty flexible with that.

The state waivers have provided the district the flexibility to serve students without labels, a change that at least one teacher endorsed:

> Teacher instinct can tell you exactly where a student's deficiency is. I don't think we need all that formal testing to tell us. I think it is on a very rare basis that a teacher really needs that much testing at how many thousands of dollars?.. do we need to do that when we've got good people?

Another example supporting the consolidated resources was provided by a teacher. Prior to the waivers the district operated a morning school for general education students and an afternoon pre-school for Title I students. Waivers have allowed the district to combine the programs and serve all the students together in an inclusive setting. In some schools in Watertown consolidated funding was occurring and the state waiver simply legitimizes what schools had been doing.

> We feel like we've been doing [consolidation] anyway, we were looking for a legalization of it; we will pull anybody who needs help; she (the resource teacher) would take those students and work with them...we were really good at not caring what the rules were, we were more concerned about meeting the needs of the students.

A constant concern with increased flexibility is assuring that scarce resources don't become diluted. A discussion during a district meeting of principals at Watertown raises concerns about how increased flexibility in the use of resources will be used. A principal was very interested in learning how to "move students in" special education without having to go through the extensive identification/verification process. His questions focused on how special education personnel could serve more students. But, his emphasis was not on collaboration or inspiring general education instruction. Rather, it was how to move students who were failing or at-risk out of general education classrooms in order for them to receive extra help with special education teachers. This type of question raises concerns about how to insure that services to students with disabilities are not unnecessarily diluted as more flexibility is introduced.

Summary

The sketches of efforts across the five districts to consolidate resources provide examples of the ways in which district administrators are conceptualizing flexibility. While the case studies do not provide exhaustive information relative to barriers or facilitating factors, they do suggest some themes. First, it is evident that a variety of forces are promoting more flexible use of resources at the local school level. Chief among these is probably the emphasis on site-based decision-making through a formal school improvement mechanism. As one of the prongs of current reforms, this move to provide schools with more discretion over instructional strategies and resources was clearly endorsed in all five districts. In general, the mechanism of school-based planning encourages more flexible use of resources; however, it is clear that these opportunities need to be accompanied by clear guidance and "permission" from district (and state) program administrators.

Thus, one of the clear themes is the importance of innovative leadership at the school, district, and state levels that supports and defines the purposes and boundaries of resource consolidation. While there is a great deal of rhetoric about trading flexibility for accountability for student outcomes, this means little to individual schools that are seeking guidance about how they can use their special education or Title 1 staff or whether they can use other professional development resources to support whole school efforts.

In at least three of the districts, granting more decision-making authority to the local schools had resulted in attempts to redefine special education programs in ways that were unacceptable to the district office. For example, schools in three of the districts were seeking to

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"send" students from general education to special education for assistance as opposed to discussing how special education's personnel and other resources could support overall schoolwide improvement. In all districts, the special education directors said that they had no real control over the schools, as long as students were not illegally placed in special education and identified students were receiving services as specified on the IEPs. But, one director did not particularly like the loss of control over schools, indicating that, "There is more to good schools than just if students are learning." In particular he wanted to see certain types of instructional models in a school.

In at least one district where special education material resources had been "blended" special education teachers perceived that they had not benefited and in fact had lost whatever allocation they previously had. When professional development planning and resources were blended, some special education teachers wondered if their unique needs would get met. For example, in one elementary school, professional development over the next several years was going to be focused on aligning the curriculum with newly developed state standards. All teachers were involved in this process and all funds as well as professional development days were allocated to this goal. However, two special education teachers wanted professional development specific to intensive behavior management, but this was neither a schoolwide need nor a priority of the principal.

The more flexible use of personnel, through co-funding positions, co-teaching, or other forms of collaborative staffing, appears to be among the more common approaches to consolidating resources. Jointly funding positions was evident in all five districts and was

motivated by desires for more inclusive programs as well as to provide services to students at-risk. Personnel from special education and Title 1, particularly paraprofessionals, were often used in classrooms, learning resource centers, or other instructional settings to provide remedial support and assistance to heterogeneous groups of students. Most of these efforts involved students with learning disabilities and other high incidence disabilities. Students with moderate to severe disabilities who were participating in general education classrooms for the most part did not "share" paraprofessionalsor other personnel. One drawback of consolidated funding is budget reporting that requires that administrators "back-out" and report an individual's salary to numerous sources. For instance, one teachers' or paraprofessionals' salary may come from three different pots of money that then must be reported to demonstrate how different categorical program dollars effect individual schools.

Clearly, all principals and other administrators perceived resource consolidation as beneficial to students and to schoolwide efforts. Issues over control, however, did seem to emerge, albeit subtly, with special education directors who were accepting of schoolwide discretion but cautious about what principals might choose to do with their resources. However, all of these individuals believed that more fluid programs were necessary to promote inclusion and more unified systems. In addition, models built upon serving all students as opposed to monitoring inputs such as number of special education teachers and aides or maintaining rigid identification and delivery processes were perceived to support district's efforts to contain overall costs. Moreover, special education directors were very supportive of the idea of using

special education resources to help students at risk. Nonetheless, they talked of the need to ensure that students with disabilities received their entitled services.

This research points to several implications for policy and practice. First, is the central importance of student outcomes and assessment data as the foundation of school improvement planning. Given that school improvement plans become the way in which schools operationalize their resource consolidation, it is critical that outcomes for students with disabilities be comprehensive and that assessment data yield information about individual student progress. There is risk in using targeted aid to support school plans that may be based on only the most general level of how students with disabilities are faring. Further, it is important for school staff to be sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities and to insure that schoolwide goals do not exclude outcomes specific to these students.

Increased flexibility at the district level to design and implement programs for students with disabilities coupled with the implementation of more rigorous academic standards and assessments represents a fusion of good general and special education policy. At a time when schools are being pressed to look inward and empowered to decide how resources are to be used, it is important that they have a concept of accountability that includes each student in their building. Homilies such as trading flexibility for accountability are only realistic when assessment data are available and monitored for each and every student in a building and when the goals of improvement for a specific school have been endorsed by every segment of the school population.

On the other hand, increasing resource consolidation does offer opportunities for schools to truly become unified systems and to promote inclusion for students with diverse learning needs as well as staff. As the nation shifts its educational philosophy to outcomes and achievement for all students, special needs programs such as special education, Title I, and bilingual education can no longer afford to be territorial. Instead, they must instill their trust in a system increasingly being held accountable for the education of all students. Program consolidation coupled with schoolwide ownership of all students rather than categorical ownership by distinct programs may provide previously untested opportunities to contribute to the delivery of the best educational services in a more efficient manner to all students.

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Appendix A

District Profiles

Banneker

Morgan River

Watertown

Doyle County

Hanley County

Table 1
Federal Legislative Strategies Promoting Flexible Programs

Programs	Strategies
Goals 2000	Sec 311 provides opportunity for SEAs, LEAs, or schools to waive certain statutory or regulatory requirements of specific federal educational programs (including Title I, Title II of IASA; Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act.
School-to-Work Opportunities Act	Title V, Sec 501-503 provides for states and local partnerships to seek waivers of certain provisions and regulations to enhance local outcomes including ESEA (Title I, II, IV, V, Carl D. Perkins Act) but not for fund distributions, certain fiscal accountability provisions, basic goals, individual eligibility, and standards related to health, safety, labor, civil rights and environmental protection.
IASA	Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Sec 1114 or ESEA (1)(A)(1)(1114). Schoolwide programs authority provides exemptions from regulations under Title I and other programs but not IDEA as long as general intent and purposes of these programs are met. Regulations regarding health, safety, civil rights, parental participation or fiscal accountability may not be waived. Title XVI, Part D or ESEA (XVI)(D) authorizes the Secretary of Education to waive most (not all) regulations of the ESEA (see exceptions above). Waivers must be specifically requested and the proposal must include "specific measurable educational improvement goals and expected outcomes" for pupils eligible to be served in relevant programs.
IDEA	State Part B Formula is modified once Federal appropriations reach $4.9 billion to one based on population children ages 3-21 (85%) and the number of children ages 3-21 in poverty (15%). Formula applies to "new" appropriations above $4.9 billion and differences in target and prior year appropriations. A new provision allows LEAs to use funds to carryout a schoolwide program; amount used is limited to the number of children with disabilities in a school multiplied by the per child expenditure. The amendments allow an LEA to use funds supporting special education and related services and supplementary aids and services that are provided in accordance with an IEP even if one or more students without disabilities benefits from the services.

BANNEKER

Demographics

Urban District

Student Population:

Fall 1995	113,428
Fall 1996	108,759
African-American	85.1%
American-Indian	0.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.6%
Hispanic	0.4%
Caucasian	13.4%

Free/Reduced Lunch: 70.1%

School Facilities:
120 elementary
28 middle
14 senior high
10 special education
5 alternative
3 vocational/technical

Special Education: 15.1%

Standards

The program is a state driven standards-based systemic reform effort in 24 districts. Components of the program include:

- Information about school progress to school improvement teams and the public;
- Expectations for what students should know and be able to do;
- Schools are graded on how well they teach students through the functional tests and performance assessments in reading, mathematics, social studies, science, writing, and language usage in Grade 3, 5, and 8.

The state reconstitutes schools that do not perform up to assessment standards. Reconstitution is a sanction enforced by the state to identify low-performing schools and implement intervention procedures (i.e., technical assistance, curriculum design, management) to improve its performance. School Improvement Team(SIT), comprised of teachers and administrators, is primary change agent for reconstituted schools.

Instructional Innovations

- Teacher training in reading and mathematics at the elementary and middle school level.
- Implementation of the Long Range Compliance Plan for Special Education in order to fit the needs of special education students into the state's overall reform effort
- Alignment of content and instruction with state standards.

Assessment and Accountability

Current Status of Implementation

- The state reform program was implemented in 1990. The state holds schools accountable for student performance. School effectiveness is judged by student performance on state assessment.
- State-driven, performance-based assessments that measure basic and critical thinking skills in Grades 3, 5, and 8.
- All public schools are tested and an annual "report card" of the results is released to the public.
- State supported professional networks between general and special education teachers to develop classroom-based performance assessments. State level planners have urged District B to develop assessment accommodations for students with disabilities, however children with disabilities continue are still omitted from state assessment.

Governance

The Mayor of District B controls the appointment of candidates for all the system-wide managerial positions for the district. They are: Superintendent of Public Instruction; Board of School Commissioners; and the Administrator for Special Education

Superintendent of Public Instruction
Appointed by the Mayor; Chief executive Officer for the school system; and works collaboratively with the board to develop and implement school policy.

District B just implemented SBM (site-based management) in the last several years. Local school groups called School Instructional Teams (SIT) decided on curriculum and instruction strategies for the school. Decision-making authority is unclear and many of the principals and teachers have conflicting views on the role and power of the SIT.

Teacher Policy

New or Unique Initiatives

- Hiring retired teachers and administrators to help reduce class size staff after-school programs

Professional Development

- Data-driven, site-based, systemic training program
- On-site professional development committees composed of general and special education teachers to create more opportunities for collaboration and alignment of the curriculum.
- Special education teachers must create individual development program and list needs for self-improvement.

Finance

Annual Budget
Actual fiscal year 96: $654,367,869

Revenue Sources (in millions)
$552.6 (city/state)
$80.8 (federal grants)
$74.6 (state govt.)
$16.2 (food revenue)
$3.65 (subsidy from highway user revenue)

Special Education

Special Education in district B operates under a consent decree negotiated in response to a 1984 lawsuit brought on behalf of special education students in the city. The suit focused on timeline violations associated with assessing children for special education programs and implementing special education programs for these children.

Transition program

- Needs assessment of transition services and develop systemic steps to bring BCPS into compliance(e.g., technical assistance, reduce dropout rates)
- Some evidence of intensive independent living skill development and vocational education training designed to equip students with the skills to live independently.

Inclusive practices

- Centers around collaborative teaching between regular education/special education teachers and teaming students.
- To ensure that every person who has the responsibility in the special education process has the authority, instructional and/or management skills, and access to resources needed to deliver services effectively, and that each person receives and benefits by high quality training.
- Development of inclusive, curriculum-based instruction (individualized and class-based)

DOYLE COUNTY

Demographics

Suburban, County District
- District experiencing large growth
- Population has grown 150% since 1980 and schools experience a 10% increase in enrollment annually

Student Population: 22,100
Caucasian 94.0%

Attendance Rate: 95%

Per-Pupil cost: $4,200

School Facilities:
10 Preschools sites
23 Elementary schools
3 Middles schools
3 Charter middle schools
3 High schools
1 Alternative high school
1 Family Resource Center
1 Expeditionary Learning school

Special Education:
- 10% of student population

Standards

- Locally driven standards
- Currently developing and implementing local driven standards that must satisfy state standards and assessments requirements.
- District adopted locally developed specific as opposed to general content standards in the subjects of language arts, math, science, geography, and history in fall of 1995 with extensive community involvement. Example of language arts standard is: *Student demonstrates the ability to conduct research through developing an idea and accessing and evaluating information from a variety of print, media and technological sources.*
- Curriculum development standards incorporate guidelines for designing a curriculum that is appropriate, equitable, feasible, research based, rigorous, and worthwhile. These standards will be used in conjunction with content standards to guide curriculum planning, textbook adoptions, and material selection at the school level.
- Currently in the process of developing instructional standards for teachers that will outline clearly defined expectations for teachers to guide them in teaching the curriculum.
- District has developed a set of policies and guidelines regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the new standards. Administrators project that most students with disabilities will participate in content standards and assessments with no adaptations or accommodations. Approximately 10% of this population is projected to need modifications while even fewer will have individualized standards and assessments.

Assessment and Accountability

- Currently in the process of developing a system for assessing student attainment of content standards.
- District aims to develop a mechanism to provide annual data on student performance as required by the state, to provide individual student achievement data for instructional purposes, and for students, and parents, and document acquisition of skills to meet graduation requirements.
- District will use "secured" and 'bodies of evidence" assessments. Secured assessments will be administered at benchmark years to measure performance and consist of a combination of norm-referenced and criterion referenced assessments. The body of evidence is essentially a portfolio of an individual's work on specific benchmarks during their school career. The bodies of evidence will be evaluated using a district rubric with a set standard of performance levels corresponding to the checkpoint being assessed. These assessments include essays, teacher "tests", personal communications, observations, and performance events developed primarily by teachers.
- Proficiency tests are newly being administered to a sample of fourth, eighth, and tenth grade students.
- Considerable professional development activities are focused upon supporting new district standards and assessments.

Governance

- District operates site-based managed governance structure
- Governance structure emphasizes consensus among stakeholders at numerous levels including education professions, parents, school level and central office administrators.
- Structured site decision making councils are formed at school levels and central to school governance. Councils are comprises of school staff, including special educators, general educators, classified staff, and parent and community representatives.
- Building Accountability Committee is mandated by state law and responsible for developing and monitoring school improvement plans. There is significant community involvement in the individual BAC's.
- District Accountability Advisory Committee is also mandated by state law and responsible for studying the district's educational needs and specifically issues of state law compliance, and recommending appropriate improvements to the Board of Education. The DAAC provides the link between the school level BAC's and the district Board.
- County-wide district maintains a strong school choice initiative.

DOYLE COUNTY

Teacher Policy

- Building Resource Teacher project supports elementary and secondary teachers by providing a site-based approach to staff development and new teacher mentoring
- District maintains strong commitment to recruitment and retention of high quality staff. Policies such as pay for performance and responsibility pay are designed to reward continued teacher development and performance. Teacher compensation relies heavily upon performance as opposed to more traditional models based upon longevity. Plan is designed to reward professional growth and development while still providing income stability.
- Reputation as an innovative and supportive district enables district to attract many applicants for new positions available each year due solely to district growth.
- Large number of new teachers strains administrators and supervisors focused upon maintaining high quality staff development in such a high reform district.
- District proposes to develop professional development standards in the near future although the currently use state and national professional development standards
- Current professional development plan supports framework for implementing systemic reform based upon new standards and assessments.

Finance

- Annual budget of approximately $100 million
- Major revenue sources: local property taxes 42%, state aid 47%, and other local revenues.
- Douglas County Educational Foundation formed in 1990 to supports activities not typically included in the budget such as computer station and software licensing for career counseling center, portable science labs for elementary students, and books to create a research center for primary students.

Special Education

- 10% of student population identified as students with disabilities
- Identification of students with disabilities is increasing annually at a rate greater (15.7%) than increases in overall student enrollment (10%).
- The district is currently struggling with the challenge of supporting a special education budget that is increasing at a rate greater than the general education budget.
- District has operated a traditional, centrally managed special education program but is currently working to shift to more site-based governance of special education services
- District supports 10 early childhood programs, 3 extended kindergarten programs and integrated, school level programs for students identified as educationally handicapped, learning disabled along with perceptual and communicative disorder programs at every schools.
- District is, to the extent possible serving students with disabilities in their neighborhood schools including a number of inclusive preschool programs.

Unique Characteristics

- The district has developed 3 means by which to address the growing need for schools: bonds, year round school schedules, and impact fees
- Building space is maximized by operating schools in four, year-round tracks. Students attend school for 45 weekdays followed by a 15 weekday vacation break, staggered all year long. Teachers maintain the same track as their students to assure instructional being continuity.
- The use of impact fees is currently being debated in the district due to questions of the constitutionality of fees levied upon developers.

HANLEY COUNTY

Demographics

Rural District with 16 schools

Student Population:

Fall 1995 7,477

Caucasian	90.1%
African-American	9.1%
Asian	0.4%
Hispanic	0.3%
Other	0.1%

Free and Reduced Lunch: 41.4%

School Facilities:

13 elementary
2 junior high schools
1 high school

Special Education:

- 12.3% of student population
- District maintains 3 special class units to serve students with significant needs
- 2 self-contained units for students with emotional and behavioral disorders
- All schools maintain 1 or 1 1/2 units for students with high-incidence disabilities

Standards

- The state had extensive reform package enacted in 1989. Law establishes six state learning goals, supported by 57 state academic expectations. These form the basis for District H's curriculum guide.
- District H has curriculum guide with broad academic frameworks. Each framework has broad goals with more specific academic expectations. These expectations each have objectives or parameters, and each objective is broken down into demonstrations.
- Through state legislation, early childhood and primary programs have changed to include developmentally-appropriate practices, multiage and multi-ability classrooms, continuous progress, authentic assessment, professional teamwork, and positive parent involvement.

Assessment and Accountability

- State Assessments administered each school-year since 1993-94. Assessments include subject matter tests, performance events, and portfolios. Portfolios emphasize writing. Tests include both open response and multiple choice items. Tasks often require written response. Student performances are scored to a 4-point rubric: novice, apprentice, proficient, or distinguished. Student scores reported on school report cards.
- State assessment originally administered in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades. Final assessment, however, was moved to 11th grade and certain portions of the assessment (i.e., math and reading) have been moved from 4th and 8th to other grades.
- State early learning profile keeps record of each student's achievement on a learning continuum, with four stages: beginning, developing, competence, and expanding.
- Performance on the state assessment is the basis for assigning rewards or crisis sanctions to the school or system. Rewards are given to both districts and schools for a two-year period.
- Alternative portfolios are used to assess some students with disabilities on state standards. Not more than 2% of all students with disabilities may participate in these alternate portfolios.

Governance

- Although the state mandated that all schools form school-based decision making (SBDM) councils in 1991, many District H schools operated similar bodies prior to 1990. Council membership is strictly regulated, including the number of parents, teachers, administrators, and minorities. State also mandates training for the SBDM councils.
- SBDM councils hire staff. Central office handles firing issues.
- Individual schools develop transformation plans on a biannual basis, which include reporting of school and district performances in core academic and non-academic (i.e. communication, student behavior), needs, targeted goals, and professional development.

Teacher Policy

- State initiated program matches teachers who are having difficult with state reforms with more experienced teachers, to aid in their professional development.
- State allows districts to use 5 of its minimum 175 instructional days for professional development. District H, which has a 185 instructional days in their school year, has used 4 to 7 days in recent years.
- State requires that 65 percent of a district's professional development funds from the state be allocated to the SBDM councils. From 1990-1995, District H provided 100% of its state staff development funds to individual schools, on the basis of school membership. In 1995-95 provided 80%, due to declining enrollment. State also developed 8 regional service centers to support districts' professional development needs. District H participates in two major cooperatives for networking and sharing professional development activities.

Finance

Annual Budget:

$38.5 million
31.4% Local
61.7% State
6.9% Federal

- State fund provides a guaranteed per pupil funds based on an adjusted formula which considers excess special education and compensatory education, vocational education, and transportation costs. School can levy local property and utility taxes for additional revenue.
- The state maintains central regulatory rule. There are not caps on special education per se, but state retains tight control over distribution of special education funds to districts, which are distributed on a ration/categorical basis.
- District pays for additional workdays for professional development.
- The district receives over $1 million in federal Title I money. Recent increase in the percentage of a student body living in poverty necessary to qualify for additional Title I funds from 25% to 35%.
- School receives federal special education Part B funds totaling about $359,000 for school-age students, and $77,000 for preschool child. The majority of this money goes to personnel salaries.

Special Education

- The state has published its "best practices" as a suggestion for local schools. District H established its neighborhood schools policy towards inclusive practice district-wide.
- Inclusion is a major part of the state reform initiatives and within District H. Many elementary schools have moved toward inclusive practices, prior to district-wide policy.
- Extensive use of collaboration classes, where special educator and general educator team teach content area classes. Exist at elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- District currently benefits from a federal grant that supports a staff person to aid in the restructuring of six districts, including District H. She provides training and technical assistance to general and special educator teams.

MORGAN RIVER

Demographics

Rural District

Student Population: 5,700

Caucasian:	69.6%
Hispanic:	24.9%
African American:	2.5%
Asian American:	1.7%
American Indian:	1.3%

Free/Reduced Lunch: 45%
Per Pupil Expenditures: $5,465

School Facilities:
13 schools
- 9 elementary schools
- 2 junior high schools
- 1 high school
- 1 alternative high school

Special Education: 10%
Birth-to-three and preschool program for students ages 3-6 with developmental disabilities.

Standards

- State has completed standards in: reading, writing, communication, mathematics, arts, health and fitness, science, and social studies. The standards incorporate specific skills students are supposed to acquire in school broken down into benchmarks at the 4, 7, and 10th grade.
- District currently in the process of integrating state developed standards. Teachers are provided release time to work collaboratively to integrate new standards.
- New standards are centralizing curricula decision making which had been very decentralized due to site based management.
- Special educators are not actively involved with developing district standards.
- State is committed to including all students in the new standards although specific guidelines or rules for inclusion are unclear.
- Teachers are making an effort to include students with disabilities in the essential leanings including appropriate goals and objectives for specific kids. However, including students with disabilities in the new standards is reportedly a real challenge.

Assessment and Accountability

- District is currently developing and piloting performance based assessments in the areas of reading, writing, communication and mathematics in anticipation of the state assessments.
- The state piloted a 4th grade writing assessment in the spring of 1996 and released the operational assessment in the spring of 1997. Performance assessments for grades 7 and 10 are to be piloted in the spring of 1997 and 1998 respectively with the final assessments being operationalized the year after they are piloted.
- In addition to the new performance assessments being developed for grades 4, 7, and 10, the district administers a number of other standardized tests.
- Specific consequences, i.e., linkage to graduation requirements, for performance on assessments have not yet been developed.
- The state provides comprehensive guidelines regarding assessment accommodations or exemptions for students with disabilities. The district is currently struggling to figure out a way to include students with disabilities in the new pilot assessments. The state level assessments are mandated to apply to every students by the year 2000 or 2001.

Governance

- The district is governed by a 5 member school board elected at large to 4 year terms.
- Site-based management was implemented in 1989-1990. District has evolved from site-based to shared decision making.
- Teachers and administrators cited the inefficiency of large group decision making and time as the motives behind shifting specific decisions away from teachers and back to the building principal.
- The district does not operate typical site-based councils incorporating parents as part of site or shared decision making. The councils are comprised of schools staff and advisory committees that meet on a number of specific issues such as curriculum.
- The local teacher's union is actively involved with district decision making.
- Due to shared decision-making, individual buildings have control of special education programs.

- Special education administrators have a "consultant" type relationship with individual buildings.

MORGAN RIVER

Teacher Policy

- State maintains a very liberal teacher certification policy
- Special education teachers are not required to have specific endorsements. Certification is offered in early childhood or K-12 special education.
- District provides individual buildings with professional development resources to be allocated at the building level.
- District is struggling to balance decentralized professional development with more centralized reforms such as standards that necessitate district wide professional development to be effective.
- District utilizes paraprofessionals to support increasingly heterogeneous classrooms. Paraprofessionals are typically supported by blended funding from a number of different sources such as Special Education, Title I and Bilingual Education.

Finance

Revenues

Federal	$ 2,496,687
State	$25,279,616
Local	$ 3,872,512

- Community passed a bond in 1993 to finance renovation of all school buildings in the district.

State recently imposed a cap on special education spending. The new state funding formula is based upon average special education per pupil expenditures and the assumption that 12.7% of all districts' students qualify for special education services. The new formula led to a loss of nearly $200,000 in the district's annual state aid due to the fact that the district serves a higher percentage of students with disabilities with higher than average expenses. The state does provide a safety net program to assist districts temporarily cope with the funding changes.

Special Education

- District operates fully-inclusive elementary classrooms and partial inclusion at middle and high school level.
- Decentralized governance has led to the development of unique special education programs at all the different schools.
- Liberal certification policies provides the district flexibility in hiring special education staff.
- District frequently hires general education teachers with special education endorsements to maximize their staffing resources while still complying with special education requirements.
- State special education funding reform is driving district to implement reforms designed to increase flexibility in the delivery of services in order to maximize resources. The district is shifting away from labeling and identifying students and seeking to provide appropriate educational services to all students without labels.

Other

- District is currently undergoing massive renovations which necessitates that individual schools shift to temporary holding schools during construction and the combination of particular schools for an entire school year.
- The district experienced a shooting in one of the junior high schools by a student that resulted in the death of two students and one teacher in 1996. The tragedy shocked the community and led to a review of school safety policies, the development of a dress code and discussion of school uniforms.

WATERTOWN

Demographics

Affluent Suburban District
High Achieving District

Student Population: 5,064
Caucasian: 94%
Asian: 1.81%
Hispanic: 1.65%
African American: 2.26%
American Indian: 0.32%

Daily Attendance: 95%
Per-pupil cost: $6,500

Free & Reduced Lunch:
16.68% Elementary
9.69% Middle School
5.79% High School

School Facilities:
6 early childhood centers
10 elementary schools
1 middle school
1 high school
1 alternative high school.

Special Education: 10.6%

Standards

- Examples of outcomes are: problems solving, critical thinking, and decision making; verbal, quantitative, scientific, and technological literacy; and living successfully in a multicultural, global society.
- Locally driven Outcomes Based Education Plan consists of nine outcomes that must be mastered in order to graduate is currently in third year of implementation.
- Outcomes were developed with extensive school wide and community involvement.
- Mastery is demonstrated by completion of knowledge and performance specific requirements.
- Knowledge specific requirements are met through completion of a specific number of courses in key academic areas such as English, mathematics, and social studies. Obtaining a diploma with commendation requires completion of more advanced courses. Performance specific requirements are integrated into the curriculum. Examples of the performance requirements are demonstrated proficiency in; problem solving, writing, creative/expressive, and technology.
- All general and special education students are required to complete the OBE
- District controlled diploma (210 credits) and diploma with commendation (225 credits) are components of OBE plan.

WATERTOWN

Assessment and Accountability

- District utilizes a variety of assessment measures including standardized criterion references tests and performance and "authentic" measures such as portfolios.
- Portfolio assessment is used inconsistently from Pre-K-gradation although the district aims to develop cumulative K-12 portfolios for all students.
- New performance assessments are integral to district's outcomes based education plan.
- Criterion reference tests are currently administered in math, reading, and writing. Math and reading tests are administered in the fifth grade while writing samples are taken in grades 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, and 12 and scored holistically based upon a rubric evaluated by a trained specialist.
- District also administers competency tests in reading, writing, math and consumerism that must be passed by all students in order to graduate.
- Increasing accountability is a key component of the district outcomes based education plan. The offering of differentiated diplomas and required mastery of the nine outcomes reflect clearly articulated expectations and accountability for student outcomes and performance.

WATERTOWN

Governance

- Board of Education elected by caucus
- No formal site based management plan. Small size and effective communication lead to informal decentralized governance
- Informal site-based governance structure that provides significant school level autonomy
- District administrators and teachers report a great deal of trust between the central office and individual schools that enables building level autonomy.
- The district maintains an amicable relationship with the local teachers association.
- Special education is integrated in the larger governance structure of the district demonstrating their commitment, and facilitating building level integration, of students with disabilities.

Teacher Policy

- District enjoys the luxury of selecting from a pool of highly qualified teacher applicants due to reputation of supporting staff and positive working environment.
- Professional staff relies heavily upon paraprofessional to support heterogeneous classrooms.
- Teachers report enjoying a great deal autonomy in their individual classrooms while still being relatively well informed of larger district initiatives and reforms.
- General and special education professional development is integrated.

Finance

- $35 million annual budget

  Local Funds: 73%

  State Funds: 25%

  Federal Funds: 2%
- State recently passed legislation that implemented a statewide property tax levy limit.

Special Education

- District is very committed to inclusive education and a state leader in inclusive practices for students with disabilities.
- Currently in the process of implementing state granted waivers of certain special education regulations aimed at containing cost and increasing flexibility in the delivery of services to students with disabilities. District sought waivers to modify student assistance teams, eligibility determination, and delivery systems.

Unique Characteristics

- The district high school has operated a block schedule for nearly 30 years.
- Technology is extremely central to instruction in District W. Recent renovations to the junior high school include cutting edge technology centers that are integrated into daily instructional practices.

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